



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte NC on November 10, 2015 at 6 p.m.

PRC MINUTES November 10, 2015

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Elaine Powell, Chair
 Kendel Bryant, Vice Chair
 Tristan McMannis, Exec. Secretary
 Sheryl Smith
 Doug Burnett
 John Leonard
 Ed Barnhart
 Aubin Guinness
 Abe Early
 Heidi Pruess
 Brian Cox (Huntersville Town Hall Meeting Re: Waymer Center)
 Jim Garges, Director, Park and Recreation (Huntersville Town
 Hall Meeting Re: Waymer Center)
 Michael Kirschman, Deputy Director, Park and Recreation

PRC Absent:

Vacant – Central 2
 Vacant – North 2

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 5:59 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Powell welcomed all to the November 2015 PRC meeting and asked each Commissioner/Staff person to introduce themselves.

Program Presentation:

Nature Preserves and Natural Resources – Reedy Creek Stream Restoration

Chris Matthews, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, shared information regarding the Department's partnership with Storm Water Services on the largest stream restoration project ever -- Reedy Creek Stream Restoration -- to restore and preserve

approximately 7.5 miles of streams and 4 acres of wetlands within and adjacent to the Reedy Creek Nature Preserve. In attendance were **William Harris**, the project manager with the City of Charlotte Storm Water Services and **Emily Reinicker**, the lead designer from Wildlands Engineering. Over the years, urbanization, agricultural usages and landscape features such as golf courses, cause streams to degrade creating wider and deeper channels until the water following rains cannot get out of the banks causing a loss of habitat. This project will bring the stream back to a more natural form and function and is scheduled to begin in late 2016. (**Note:** More details regarding this project can be found in the PowerPoint presentation by clicking [HERE](#) and is also included in the November PRC Minutes Binder, **Section 4a**, housed in the Director's office.)

Discussion among the Park and Recreation Commission regarding the project addressed the following:

- The project has a website www.ReedyCreekRestoration.com for updates and information.
- Construction will take approximately 1 year, depending on weather but will be regularly monitor over the next 5 years for bank stabilization, erosion, sediment levels, fish, bug and wildlife habitat and survival of native vegetation.
- Future impacts to the restored stream will be minimal due to planning by the design team to make sure that the channels will be able to handle run-off from the one large neighborhood adjoining the nature preserve. In addition, property ownership around the preserve seems stable and the Department has purchased some surrounding property, which will provide buffer from future housing development.
- The cost of the project is \$4 million and is being funded by the City's Stream and Wetland Mitigation Bank.
- The city will work in conjunction with the Department's Nature Center special events to provide education to the public regarding the project as well as continued articles in the newspaper and the project's website to make sure people understand what will be happening and why it is important to the success of the project now and far into the future.
- Chair Powell asked Chris Matthews to give a 30 second commercial on why this project is so important. Chris responded "Reedy Creek is a well-loved nature preserve and has a lot of great resources. While the stream is pretty to look at it does not function properly. In order for us to make sure the habitat is good for wildlife, trees are not falling and to ensure long term protection of that area, we need to do this project now. Left as is, it will only continue to worsen."
- Stream restoration on the southern portion of Little Sugar Creek Greenway would mainly be stabilization and erosion controls. Because of current development, there is not enough land available to restore the stream.

Appointments – Advisory Councils –Applicants

Director's Report

Deputy Director, Michael Kirschman, shared that Director Garges was attending a meeting in Huntersville regarding the Waymer Center. Chair Powell advised that Commissioner Cox was also attending the meeting regarding the Waymer Center on behalf of the PRC.

Michael reported on the following:

Capital Project Update: The Department currently has over 60 projects under design or construction for over \$130 million. Projects range from neighborhood parks, community parks,

regional parks, sportsplexes, shelters, greenways, nature preserves, and nature centers to historic buildings. (The handout provided to the PRC covered project highlights)

Capital Project Flexibility: As previously shared with the PRC, due to the bidding climate, the Department is bundling projects in order to create a larger project that is more appealing to bidders as well as adding money to projects as needed. The Department is also currently working with the BOCC for project funding flexibility, making it possible to move money around as needed to get projects going. The total number would remain the same for all the projects, but money could be shifted based on need.

Discussion among the Park and Recreation Commission addressed the following:

- Many bids for projects are coming in high due to the current bidding climate and also because many of the projects were put together for the 2008 bond package; that funding is no longer adequate. One option being considered is to borrow forward from next year's projects in order to get current projects moving. (Funding would not be reduced on the projects being borrowed from, but would delay the project another year. Staff is currently looking at projects to determine which projects could be delayed with the least impact. PRC will be notified when those decisions are made. A great side benefit to having flexible spending would be the opportunity to have projects design ready so construction can actually begin in the year it is funded.)
- Need for additional funding is because of the current bidding climate and not because the scope of the project was changed. The Department will not be picking the projects to get more money, it will be based on the bids. For example, if a project has a budget of \$2 million and all the bids are \$2.5 million, the project would be held up because you cannot accept a bid that is over budget unless you add more money to the budget.
- Educating the public so they understand the decision making process is challenging, but very important and will be an agenda item on the upcoming PRC Retreat. As Deputy Kirschman pointed out, with the current BOCC 3-year capital project plan, the public sees a project listed but don't understand that it then takes 2 or 3 years before completion.

Eastland Mall: Master Planning is ongoing for the site. CMS is in the process of taking down their property and starting on the school project.

Pearle Street Park: Questions regarding whether the city should help fund Pappas Properties is being discussed at the city level. The main concern for the Department surrounding the Pappas Property development at Pearle Street Park is the parking concern. This park is unique in that its ball fields are being used for organized play by Myers Park Trinity Little League and Charlotte Junior Soccer and parking has mainly been on private property across the street. With the development, this parking will no longer be available and has become a concern of the organizations using the park. It is important to note that the Department does not provide parking at neighborhood parks beyond a very few spaces, however, the Department will continue to work with these groups and Pappas Properties to try and come up with a solution that is within means.

Eastway Park Neighborhood Meeting: Jeff Robinson, Division Director of Park Operations, shared information from the recent Eastway Park Neighborhood Meeting:

The primary concern of the Eastway Park neighborhood was the number of years since Phase I of Eastway Park was completed and the amount of money being spent on park projects in uptown Charlotte and on the Sportsplex in Matthews in front of Phase II for Eastway Park. Jeff reported

that Director Garges shared the following with the group to help them understand the philosophy and the process for park planning:

- The philosophy of the Department to spread projects out around the County rather than all capital funding being poured into one project, or phase.
- Reminded that the recession brought all projects to a halt and caused projects to be several years behind schedule.
- Shared the BOCC prioritization process; the Department prioritizes projects and they are then prioritized along with all County capital projects by the BOCC and placed on a 3-year plan. Current projects are funded through FY18.
- Encouraged to communicate their needs to the BOCC to get Phase II on FY19.

By the end of the meeting it was felt the neighbors of Eastway Park had a better understanding of the process. Discussions were held about the amenities of the park and the planned amenities of the park as to their fit with the character of the neighborhood and the desires of the residents. Director Garges suggested future meetings to revisit the Master Plan for the park to solicit input and to consider updates to the Master Plan for Phase II of the park. PRC will be informed of upcoming meetings.

Discussion followed by the PRC and Staff regarding the following:

- At the request of the County Manager's office and the BOCC a list was compiled of all projects currently waiting for Phase II. This list contained 26 projects waiting for Phase II. Eastway Park Phase II would cost \$23 million to build. It was noted by Deputy Kirschman that it makes better sense to build large regional parks in phases and to build out small, neighborhood parks.
- Chair Powell expressed her understanding of the concerns of the Eastway Park neighbors, noting the long drive into the park, the lack of shade, not designed for 8 to 80 (8 years of age to 80 years of age), perceived has a high crime area and amenities are not available because of vandalism.
- In response to concerns regarding the perception of high crime at Eastway Park, Jeff Robinson shared that the Department monitors crime reports from all parks and Eastway has very few reports. The perception of high crime may stem from an earlier history of higher crime.
- Deputy Kirschman share some history as it pertained to Eastway Park and the 2008 bond package. Projects to include in the 2008 bond projects were decided on and approved by the PRC. At the time, construction of Eastway Park Phase I was already under construction, therefore Phase II for the park was not included in the bond package with the assumption at the time that it would be completed out in the next few years. Unfortunately, the recession set everything back 3 to 4 years.
- Commissioner Barnhart expressed his appreciation for how well the Department manages "equity" throughout the County with the resources they are allotted and said that it was the PRC's role to educate and advocate.
- Commissioner Pruess inquired with regard to future Eastway Park meetings if the Department pulled in partners to participate. Jeff Robinson responded that CMPD is invited to all of our public meetings as well as any partners that would be applicable to the meeting situation such as city council members, BOCC, schools, neighborhood groups, churches as well as everyone within a certain radius of the park. Commissioner Pruess felt that CMPD presence should have an active role at public meetings, such as sharing statistics if appropriate.
- Commissioner Burnett inquired about Phase I and II (which is scheduled to be complete next year) of the Mecklenburg County Sports Complex at Matthews. Deputy Kirschman

responded that at the time of the 2008 bond referendum, this complex was not originally included in the project list, but due to lobbying efforts, the Sportsplex project was included in the 2008 bond referendum which bumped the bond from \$200 million to \$250 million.

- At the request of Commissioner Leonard, Deputy Kirschman reviewed the change in capital project prioritization: Pre-recession the Department would prioritize their projects within their percentage of the bonding capacity. Post-recession the County developed a new 3-year prioritization process in which every department provide a list of capital projects, which were then prioritized by the BOCC along with all other County capital projects. In the first and second year, Park and Recreation had very few projects on the project list, but in the third year had 30 plus projects. The Board realizes there are issues and it is expected there will be some changes to the next 3-year round.

Strategic Planning Process:

Mario Chang, Senior Fiscal Administrator, shared with the PRC the County's new strategic planning process which will ultimately replace the current Balance Scorecard for measurement of performance. This process, which began in August, is still in the initial stages for all County Departments and is scheduled for completion in December of 2015, shared with BOCC at their retreat in January, 2016 and shared with the PRC in February, 2016. The process includes strategic goals for each Department and must include an environmental risk management goal and an environmental leadership goal. Goals for Park and Recreation currently are:

Goal #1: Increase the availability of fitness and wellness programs and awareness of facilities and services.

Goal #2: Expand facilities maintenance and improvement plans to keep parks, greenways, recreation and nature preserve facilities in optimal condition and provide current estimated costs and operating resources required for new facilities approved by the Board.

Goal #3: Stewardship of Mecklenburg County's natural and cultural resources through protection, management, interpretation, property assessment and restoration of natural communities and resources.

This process is strategic planning at a very high level and was made easier for Park and Recreation because the Department has been doing strategic planning since Director Garges arrived 9 years ago with the Key Ingredients for Success, FALTs, quarterly reports and tracking on new initiatives. In addition, the Master Plan information was utilized to justify strategies and objectives. The process requires that each goal have an objective, a strategy, action items (including total associated costs) and performance measures.

Commissioner Pruess asked how this strategic plan will match up with the capital budget. Mario responded that he did not think the strategic plan, in this initial stage, will influence funding in the capital budget at this time. The intent moving forward is to provide the County Manager with the strategic direction of each Department and the cost to get there and to line up strategic planning with the budget process at some point.

Commissioner Pruess asked if staff felt it would be important for Advisory Council members to focus their efforts on what is in this strategic plan. Deputy Kirschman agreed that while there is a finite level of detail in this plan that is very high level there is no reason why the Advisory Councils shouldn't be involved. In addition, Michael pointed out that the Department took our current Key Ingredients for Success, something the Department has used for years, and adapted them to this process by identifying specific actions and the cost to accomplish each goal. While communication about the strategic planning and Department goals to the Advisory Councils is important it is also important to be mindful of engaging them on a superficial level.

Commissioner Pruess shared concern, particularly with regard to the Athletic Advisory Council, that members often do not feel they have a purpose or feel they are contributing so it would make a real difference if their discussions were aligned to the big picture goal and they felt they were making an impact. Deputy Kirschman agreed that Advisory Council members need to have strong agendas with meaty subjects for discussion and opportunities to make recommendations and/or educational opportunities. He will get with James Alsop with regard to the Athletic Advisory Council.

Commissioner Leonard asked, based on goal 2, if there would be urgency for human capital needs to be addressed in the strategic planning process. Staff responded that our human capital needs are part of the yearly assessment and met through the normal budget process. The strategic planning process being discussed is at a much higher level -- for the Department to look three to five years out, come up with major initiatives, a strategic plan of action and the cost to get there.

Chair Powell asked if this strategic plan took into consideration citizen input. Staff responded that this strategic plan is all tied back to the Department's current plans and community input from the Master Plan Community Survey, Annual County Survey, the Livability Plan and the Employee Climate Survey. Lower citizen satisfaction over the past several years with our maintenance is data used to justify our goal to expand maintenance and facility improvement plans.

PRC Chair Report

PRC Retreat: Chair Powell reminded the Board of the upcoming PRC Retreat on Saturday, January 23, 2016 at the Reedy Creek Indoor Shelter from 9 to 3. The PRC planning sub-committee met to plan the retreat and the agenda was set and Rebecca Herbert secured as the facilitator. All has been approved by Director Jim Garges. Notes regarding the retreat:

- Casual and informal
- Plenty of ice-breakers
- Invitation to BOCC Chairman Fuller and Vice-Chairman Clarke to attend
- Notes and information will be recorded, if needed, on flip charts
- A final agenda will be sent out soon. Submit any additional agenda items to Chair Powell.
- A hike will follow the retreat if time permits

Commissioner Smith Resignation: Commissioner Smith announced her resignation from the PRC as she has moved and no longer lives in the Central 1 Park Region. She shared her appreciation for all that she has learned and the fun she has had participating on the Board. Commissioner Smith will be greatly missed. Annette Vaughters was suggested as a qualified applicant for the vacancy. Chair Power encouraged Commissioner Smith to have her submit her application for appointment consideration by the BOCC.

Consent Items

Motion was made by Commissioner McMannis to approve the PRC Minutes of October 13, 2015, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryant and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to approve all correspondence and Advisory Council Minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryant and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests

CATS to Pull Tyvola Sr. Center Bus Stop: Commissioner McMannis shared that at the Sr. Citizen Advisory Council Meeting it was communicated that CATS has decided to pull the bus stop at the Tyvola Senior Center. Commissioner McMannis said CATS has agreed to a meeting to discuss and will be held at 5:30 on November 11, 2015 at the West Boulevard Branch Library. He and Terri Stowers, Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, will be in attendance and he encourage anyone that might be available to also attend. Commissioner McMannis said the alternate stops present safety concerns and would be a difficult walk for seniors. Deputy Kirschman was not aware that CATS was planning to pull this stop. Staff will attend this meeting to make sure CATS understands the importance of the stop, not only for the seniors, but also for the additional need for transportation that will come as a result of the future Queens Tennis Facility and the expansion of the Marion Diehl Center. Commissioner Burnett suggested CATS be invited to make a presentation to the PRC on how the Department's initiative for public access to parks factors into the CATS route plans.

Reid Park Opening: A grand opening is set for November 13 at 10 a.m. at 3207 Amy James Avenue.

Lincoln Heights Park Insured: Commissioner Smith shared that the Lincoln Heights Park is now insured.

Staff Report

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.